

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MANILA 05226 040422Z
ACTION SS-25

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 5226

EXDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT PARA 2)

EYES ONLY FOR DEP ASST SEC OAKLEY

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, RP, US
SUBJECT: POSSIBLE AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT IN ELECTION EVE OPINION POLL

1. BUD LEWIS, MEMBER OF ROPER ORGANIZATION, CALLED UPON CHARGE AT EMBASSY APRIL 3 REPORTEDLY AT SUGGESTION OF DEP ASST SEC ROBERT OAKLEY TO REPORT UPON PLANS FOR AN ELECTION EVE PHILIPPINE OPINION POLL OSTENSIBLY FOR PHILIPPINE NEWS IN NEW YORK (MR. ESCLAMADE), BUT WITH INVOLVEMENT HERE OF LABAN OPPOSITION (EX-SENATOR MITRA) WHICH WISHES HIM TO SURFACE POLL RESULTS IN ELECTION EVE PRESS CONFERENCE.

2. LEWIS WAS ADVISED THAT WHILE EMBASSY DOES NOT PRESUME TO TELL HIM AS PRIVATE CITIZEN WHAT TO DO, THERE ARE SEVERAL IMPORTANT ASPECTS HE SHOULD TAKE CAREFULLY INTO ACCOUNT. THESE INCLUDE:

(A) STRICT NON-INVOLVEMENT IN ELECTION WHICH AMERICAN EMBASSY HAS SOUGHT TO MAINTAIN IN APPEARANCE AS WELL AS FACT.

(B) CURRENTLY OVERHEATED POLITICAL CLIMATE WITH REGIME FROM
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PRESIDENT MARCOS DOWN REPEATEDLY ALLEGING U.S. INTERVENTION IN ELECTION.

(C) EXTREME POLITICAL SENSITIVITY OF REGIME (1) TO ANY DIVERGENCE FROM PARTY LINE THAT KBL CANDIDATES LEAD LABAN BY GROWING MARGINS AND (2) TO ANY SUGGESTION BALLOTING MAY BE RIGGED.

(D) POSSIBILITY IF NOT PROBABILITY REGIME MAY BE LOOKING FOR INCIDENT TO EXPLOIT AS CAUSE CELEBRE TO SUPPORT ITS ALLEGATIONS OF U.S. INTERVENTION.

(E) VULNERABILITY OF POLLING OPERATION AND LEWIS' ASSOCIATION TO EXPLOITATION BY REGIME AND OPPOSITION AND EASE WITH WHICH HE AS AMERICAN AND HIS ORGANIZATION COULD BE ALLEGED TO HAVE CONTACTS WITH AND BE WORKING FOR USG TO EMBARRASSMENT OF LATTER AS WELL AS HIMSELF.

3. PRESSED FOR PERSONAL OPINION, CHARGE TOLD LEWIS THAT LEWIS' CONTEMPLATED INVOLVEMENT WOULD APPEAR TO MAKE HIM AS AN AMERICAN VULNERABLE TO SUMMARY DEPORTATION IF NOT DETANTION; THAT AT LEAST PRE-BALLOTING PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT OF RESULTS BE ESCHEWED, SINCE IT INEVITABLY WOULD BE SEEN AS AN ATTEMPT TO INFLUENCE VOTING; AND THAT ENTIRE OPERATION LOOKED VERY PRICKLY AND SHOULD BE VIEWED MOST SKEPTICALLY.

4. LEWIS ASKED IF THE CHARGE MEANT LEWIS COULD NOT EXPECT EMBASSY ASSISTANCE SHOULD HE FIND HIMSELF IN TROUBLE WITH GOP AUTHORITIES. HE WAS ADVISED THAT EMBASSY WOULD EXERT SAME PROTECTIVE EFFORTS IN HIS BEHALF AS FOR OTHER AMERICAN CITIZENS.

5. LEWIS SAID HE WOULD MAKE UP HIS MIND IN A DAY AND LET
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US KNOW. HE WAS REQUESTED NOT TO INVOLVE THE EMBASSY IN ANY WAY YEA OR NAY.

6. SUBSEQUENTLY, MR. LEWIS IS BEING ADVISED THAT ACCORDING TO PRESS ACCOUNTS (E.G., TIMES JOURNAL, MARCH 29). SECTION 40 OF THE 1978 ELECTION CODE STATES;

"IT SHALL BE UNLAWFUL FOR ANY FOREIGNER, WHETHER JURIDICAL OR NATURAL PERSON, TO AID ANY CANDIDATE OR POLITICAL PARTY DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY, OR TAKE PART IN OR INFLUENCE IN ANY MANNER, ANY ELECTION OR TO CONTRIBUTE OR MAKE ANY CONTRIBUTION WITH ANY ELECTION CAMPAIGN OR PARTISAN POLITICAL ACTIVITIES."

7. COMMENT: LEWIS SEEMED TO APPRECIATE THE DISCUSSION AND TO HAVE ABSORBED THE POINTS MADE, ALTHOUGH HE PROBABLY HOPED FOR MORE CATEGORICAL GUIDANCE. WE RECOGNIZE HAZARDS EITHER WAY SHOULD LEWIS PROCEED AND MOST LIKELY GET INTO SOME DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY WITH GOP, OR WITHDRAW UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH SUGGEST THE EMBASSY HAD DISCOURAGED PRIVATE EFFORT TO KEEP PUBLIC OPINION RECORD HONEST.

8. WE WERE FIRM WITH LEWIS WHILE LEAVING THE DECISION UP

TO HIM. BELIEVE HE LEFT SOBERED AND DISINCLINED TO PURSUE
POLL FURTHER. HOWEVER, WE HESITATE TO FORECAST FINAL
DECISION BY LEWIS, A FORMER NEWSPAPERMAN, INTRIGUED BY
SITUATION WITH SYMPATHY FOR UNDERDOG.

9. PLEASE ADVISE IF YOU WISH US TO MORE VIGOROUSLY
DISCOURAGE LEWIS, E.G., DIRECTLY URGE HIM TO ABANDON
HIS PROJECT INVIEW OF THE RISK OF PROBABLE EMBARRASSMENT
TO USG.
STULL

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